naturhistorisches museum wien nhm

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Vienna, November 20th, 2018

Invitation to the press tour: „Faivovich & Goldberg. In Search of Mesón de Fierro“

The Argentine artist duo presents an art intervention in hall 6 of the Natural History Museum in Vienna, on display from November 21st, 2018, until March 11th, 2019.

Press tour on Tuesday, November 20th, 2018, at 10.30 a.m. with:

- **Univ.-Prof. Dr. Christian Köberl**, *director general of NHM Vienna*
- **Dr. Maria Eugenia Varela,** *Instituto de Ciencias Astronómicas, de la Tierra des Espacio, San Juan, Argentina*
- **Dr. Ludovic Ferrière,** *curator of the meteorite collection, NHM Vienna*
- **Guillermo Faivovich,** *artist*
- **Nicolás Goldberg,** *artist*
- **Daniela Zyman,** *curator*

The Argentine artist duo Faivovich & Goldberg will be presenting at Naturhistorisches Museum Wien (Natural History Museum of Vienna), a new iteration of their project "In Search of Mesón de Fierro", located within the museum’s historic mineral and meteorite exhibit halls. The NHM not only houses one of the largest meteorite collection in the world, but it also has the longest history dating back to 1751 evidencing more than 250 years of scientific research, recording, and observation.

For the last twelve years, Faivovich & Goldberg have been developing an extensive research endeavor that revolves around the cultural impact of the Campo del Cielo iron meteorite, which fell in the distant plains of the Chaco region in Northern Argentina about 4000 years ago. One of these iron masses, known as Mesón de Fierro, the first meteorite ever reported from the American continent, was noted in 1576 by Spanish conquistadores who were escorted to the impact site by indigenous guides.

The mass, estimated to weigh between 15 to 20 tons, was visited for the following 200 years, and then mysteriously vanished although many missions have attempted its retrieval.

Since their first expedition to Campo del Cielo in 2006, Faivovich & Goldberg have embarked in the search for this missing mass. As they realized that their venture wouldn't necessarily succeed in ground zero, they launched a wide-ranging research in institutions, archives, and collections around the world, looking for traces linked to the history of the “lost” meteorite. In 2017, after years of countless adventures and travels, they found, in collaboration with curators at the NHM Vienna's meteorite collection, a 19-gram fragment, with inventory number A18, that they were able to link back to Mesón de Fierro.

In the context of this finding, the exhibition, curated by Daniela Zyman, serves as a platform where the enigmatic history of the Mesón de Fierro can unfold.

The exhibition is supported by the “Embassy of Argentina in Austria” and “Vienna Art Week 2018” (19 – 25 Nov).

Press material: www.nhm-wien.ac.at/presse/

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About the exhibition „Faivovich & Goldberg. In Search of Mesón de Fierro“

What if you replaced the word *nature* by *culture* or *nature-culture*, dissolving the radical divide that we have learned to practice for way too long? In the new Parliament of Things we would encounter and renegotiate our relationships with deep frozen genetic samples, stones from other planets and heart implants that prolong lives. The artists Faivovich & Goldberg have been researching a specific nature-cultural assemblage, the so-called Campo del Cielo in Argentina for over twelve years. They brought meteorites into art museums, displayed photographic imprints and re-established long lost narratives. They make us consider what specimens can do outside their existence in labs, on museum shelves and in the dusted vitrines of collectors. They tell new stories and imagine new ideas with old forms of knowledge. The exhibition in room Nr. VI of the NHM Vienna is only a fragment of a very long and very old story.

Known to the indigenous people of the north east of Argentina as *Pigüem Nonraltá* – the field of the sky, Campo del Cielo is an ancient crater field in the Chaco region, which has been a vibrant cultural site for over 4000 years, with an estimated impact mass of over 800 tons.

1783
An expedition under the Spanish Crown and led by Capitán Rubín de Celis is the last witness to a 15 to 20-ton meteorite, known as *Mesón de Fierro*, the first meteorite ever reported (1576) in America. At the time, a drawing of the mass is produced by the Gallego cartographer Pedro Antonio Cerviño and a detailed report presented a few years later at the Royal Society of London: *Either this mass was produced in the spot where it lies, or it was conveyed hither by human art, or cast hither by some operation of nature. It could not be generated here, according to any known process of nature."*[1] (1786)
Since its last sighting, Mesón de Fierro has mysteriously vanished.

1807
A small meteoritic fragment enters the collection of the *Vereinigte Naturalien-, physikalische und astronomische Cabinet* of Emperor Franz I Stephan under the name of Tucuman (i.e. a synonym for the Campo del Cielo meteorite). It is described in the book by Partsch (1843), „Die Meteoriten oder vom Himmel fallende Steine und Eisenmassen im k. k. Hof-Mineralienkabinet zu Wien“ as: *Kleines Stück, mit in Folge der Abmeisselung gekrümmten Blättern, mit einer kleinen geätzten und einer noch kleineren blau angelaufenen Fläche, die jedoch wegen Verquetschungen des Eisens nichts Lehrreiches darbieten. – $1^{3}/_{32}$ Loth. – 1807. – XXII. 16. – Durch den verstorbenen v. Fichtel aus Madrid zu Kauf erhalten.“*

Some Account of the meteoric Stones, in the Imperial Museum at Vienna describes the impressions of a scientist visiting the mineralogical collection in June, 1815, detailing a glass case which contained at the time nineteen meteorite specimens: listed by the author as “No. 6” was the specimen from Tucuman. This account confirms not only that the sample had been exhibited publicly, but that is was also one of the first specimens to enter the meteorite collection. After the collection’s massive enlargement the sample has been preserved for over two centuries in the meteorite collection’s storages.

2011
Following the fragmented and ongoing narrative around the few existing documents related to this elusive specimen, the artists Faivovich & Goldberg make a 1:1 scale painting based on a photographic reproduction of a drawing of the meteorite. While the location of Cerviño’s original drawing and the meteorite it depicts are currently unknown, the gesture of producing its painting stands as an invocation of the meteorite’s rediscovery.

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[1] Michel Rubín de Celis und Joseph Banks, “*An Account of a Mass of Native Iron, Found in South America".* In: *El Taco,* Guillermo Faivovich & Nicolas Goldberg, The Campo del Cielo Meteorites; Vol. 1 (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2010). 22

2017
After innumerable investigations and a world-wide research program, Faivovich & Goldberg identify the small and heavily chiseled meteorite sample “A18” in the collection of the NHM Vienna as a fragment of the long-lost *Mesón de Fierro*. The tiny 19-gram specimen is the only earthly remnant that so far has been recognized after 234 years of search. It connects the ongoing open-ended histories around the disappeared mass with an artistic re-mediation of the cultural narratives embedded in the histories of meteorites, the museological contexts they live in, and the kind of nonhuman worlds that stones and metallic objects inhabit.

Description of the meteorite specimens of Tucuman (i.e., Campo del Cielo) in the collection in 1843: Paul Partsch, „Die Meteoriten oder vom Himmel gefallene Steine und Eisenmassen im k. k. Hof-Mineralienkabinet zu Wien“, Vienna, 1834, p. 128 – 130 [in German]:

89. Tucuman,

15 Meilen von Otumpa (das nach einigen Angaben im Bezirke, jetzt Staate, St. Jago del Estero liegen soll) in einer wüsten Gegend des Staates Tucuman, einer der vereinigten Provinzen von Rio de la Plata (argentinische Republik), Süd-Amerika.

Wurde von Don Miguel Rubin de Celis im Auftrage der spanischen Regierung im Jahre 1783 aufgesucht, und ist durch eine Uebersetzung seines Berichtes in den Londoner Philos. Transact. vom Jahre 1788. T. I. der wissenschaftlichen Welt bekannt geworden. — Die Fallzeit ist unbekannt. — Rubin de Celis schätzte das Gewicht der Masse auf 300 Centner.

Derbes und dichtes gediegenes Eisen, oft mit grösseren oder kleineren Höhlungen, die zuweilen ganz oder theilweise mit Schwefelkies ausgefüllt sind, der auch sonst noch in kleineren Partien in der Masse zerstreut ist. Auf Bruchflächen kommt eine krystallinische Structur, parallel den Flächen des Oktaeders zum Vorschein, auf polirten Flächen kurze, nach verschiedenen Richtungen gekehrte, linienförmige Einschnitte. Durch mässiges Aetzen erscheinen auf diesem, durch Salpetersäure schwer angreifbaren Meteoreisen keine Widmannstättenschen Figuren, sondern kurze, etwas erhöhte Linien, die nach mehreren Richtungen gekehrt sind, sich auch berühren und gegenseitig schneiden, und dem Ganzen

ein gestricktes oder federartiges Ansehen verleihen, je nachdem die Striche sich unter rechten oder schiefen Winkeln berühren oder schneiden. Die geätzten Flächen gleichen in dieser Beziehung, d. h. hinsichtlich ihrer Zeichnung, der langsam erkalteten krystallinischen Oberfläche mancher Metallkuchen, z. B. von Antimon, Tellur, Wismuth, oder auch der Zeichnung, welche oft auf gefrorenen Fensterscheiben zum Vorschein kommt. Durch sehr starkes Aetzen biethet dieses Eisen eine körnige Oberfläche dar, von tiefen Einschnitten nach verschiedenen Richtungen durchkreuzt. — Ein Meteoreisen von merkwürdiger, nur mit dem Eisen von Senegal verwandter Beschaffenheit.

1. Ein Stück mit viel natürlicher Oberfläche, mit Bruchflächen, worauf sich oktaedrische Theilungsgestalten befinden, und einer polirten Schnittfläche, wodurch zwei Höhlungen durchschnitten wurden, wovon die grössere theilweise mit Schwefelkies ausgefüllt ist. — $19\,^{23}/_{32}$ Loth. — 1840. IV. 8. — Aus der Heuland'schen, später Heath'schen Meteoriten-Sammlung durch Herrn Pötschke gekauft. Kam durch einen in Chili ansässigen Engländer nach London.

2. Platte, von der einen Seite schwach und von der anderen theilweise stark geätzt. — $3\,^{1}/_{16}$ Loth. — Von 1840. IV. 8. — Abschnitt von Nr. 1.

3. a. Kleines Stück, mit in Folge der Abmeisselung gekrümmten Blättern, mit einer kleinen geätzten und einer noch kleineren blau angelaufenen Fläche, die jedoch wegen Verquetschung des Eisens nichts Lehrreiches darbiethen. — $1\,^{3}/_{32}$ Loth. — 1807. XXII. 16. — Durch den verstorbenen v. Fichtel aus Madrid zu Kauf erhalten.

3. b. Kleines Stück mit natürlicher Oberfläche und

einer kleinen polirten Fläche. — 1 1/8 Loth. — 1827. XXVII. 4044. — Aus der von der Nüll'schen Mineralien-Sammlung, in die es ebenfalls durch den verstorbenen v. Fichtel gekommen ist.

3. c. Ganz kleines, schön angelaufenes Plättchen, mit kurzen feinen Strichelchen und kleinen Pünktchen; von der einen Seite geätzt. — 3/32 Loth. — Ein Abschnitt von Nr. 1.

The artists Guillermo Faivovich and Nicolás Goldberg

Guillermo Faivovich (Buenos Aires, 1977) and Nicolás Goldberg (Paris, 1978) began collaborating in 2006 on “A Guide to Campo del Cielo”, an extensive research endeavor that revolves around the cultural impact of the Campo del Cielo meteorites.

Through this case study, a continuous journey has led them from the crater field to an ongoing program of wide-reaching fieldwork. Their work includes presentations at Portikus, Frankfurt (2010), Fondazione Merz, Torino (2011), Documenta 13, Kassel (2012), 9th Mercosul Biennial, Porto Alegre (2013), Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires (2014), 11th Gwangju Biennial (2016), MALBA, Buenos Aires; Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary, Vienna (2017); Tensta Konsthall, Estocolmo (2018). Since 2014, they have engaged in a long-term collaboration with Arizona State University, creating a series of projects and exhibits that was unveiled at the ASU Art Museum in October 2018 and are researchers in residence at the Museo Rosa Galisteo de Rodríguez, Santa Fe, Argentina.

They have published “The Campo del Cielo Meteorites – Vol. 1: El Taco” and “The Campo del Cielo Meteorites –Vol. 2: Chaco”, published on occasion of documenta 13 (2012) and “La caza del Snark”, edited by Editorial Polígrafa (2014).

Faivovich & Goldberg live and work in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Information

Opening hours NHM Vienna:

Thursday-Monday: 9 a.m. - 6.30 p.m.
Wednesday: 9 a.m. - 9 p.m.
Tuesday: closed
last entrance half an hour before closing time

Exceptions
Mon, Dec 24, 2018: 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Closed
Dec. 25
Jan. 1

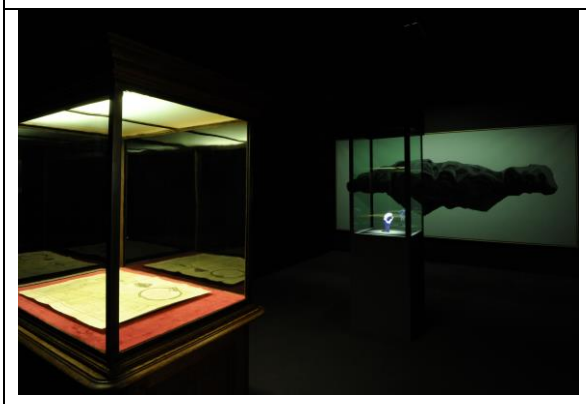
Admission charges:

Adults	€ 12,00
Under 19 & Friends of NHM Vienna	*free*
reduced	€ 10,00
Groups (15 or more people) - per person	€ 10,00
Students, apprentices, soldiers aged under 27*	€ 7,00
Annual pass	€ 33,00
Digital Planetarium	€ 5,00
Reduced	€ 3,00

About the Natural History Museum Vienna
The museum is home to world-famous and unique objects, such as the 29,500-year-old Venus of Willendorf, the Steller's sea cow that became extinct over 200 years ago, and enormous dinosaur skeletons. Further highlights in the 39 exhibit halls include the world's largest and oldest public collection of meteorites, including the spectacular "Tissint" meteorite from Mars, as well as the permanent anthropological exhibition on the origins and development of humans, and the new prehistoric exhibition with the Venus Cabinet and the Gold Cabinet. However, time does not stand still. That is why on the occasion of the museum's 125th anniversary a new Digital Planetarium has been opened, featuring fulldome projection technology that will give new visitors the chance to embark on fascinating virtual journeys in stunning scientific detail to the edge of the Milky Way galaxy or Saturn's rings. The museum's departments are home to around 60 scientists carrying out fundamental research in a wide range of fields related to earth sciences, life sciences and human sciences. This makes the museum an important public institution and one of the largest non-university research centers in Austria..

We thank Illy – the coffee sponsor of press conferences at NHM Vienna.

Press pictures „Faivovich & Goldberg. In Search of Mesón de Fierro“ (1/2)

	Guillermo Faivovich and Nicolás Goldberg © Faivovich & Goldberg
	Installation view © NHM Vienna, Alice Schumacher
	Installation view / Map © NHM Vienna, Alice Schumacher
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Press pictures „Faivovich & Goldberg. In Search of Mesón de Fierro“ (2/2)

	Installation view / Mesón de Fierro © NHM Vienna, Alice Schumacher
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